



# Sea Otter Viewing Etiquette and Protection

## Large Sea Otter Rafts in Monterey, California



Photo: Gena Bentall

Sea otters in kelp in Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary.



Photo: Gena Bentall

Sea otters rafting up in large groups.

### Background

Since January 2023, particularly large rafts of sea otters have been resting together in the kelp between Monterey Harbor and Point Cabrillo.

A “raft” is a group of sea otters resting together, and they often occur in kelp, but not always.

Although raft sizes can vary throughout the day, some estimates have had more than 200 otters in the largest aggregations.

Sea otters generally have relatively small home ranges of a few miles, with no large seasonal migrations.

Sea otters may move in response to weather, age, and sex, and often gather in more protected areas during

prolonged storms. The exact reason for recent unusually large rafts is unknown. Other factors beyond weather could also be contributing.

### Please Give Sea Otters Space

It is important to give these animals space to rest and save energy, especially during the winter season. Disturbance can be harmful!

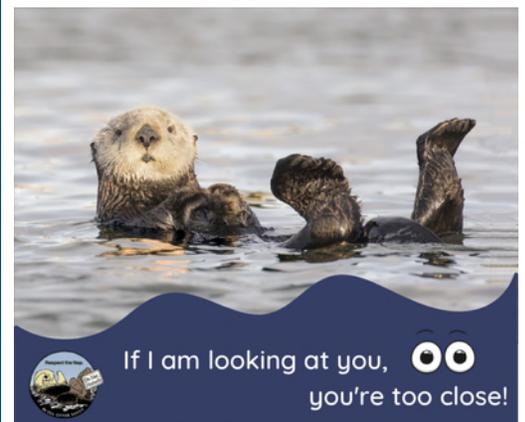
The rafting otters are especially sensitive to approaches from boaters, divers, and kayakers.

If you are on the water, please keep your distance and follow all federal laws so as not to harass or disturb the otters whether in a raft or not.

Please visit [www.seaottersavvy.org](http://www.seaottersavvy.org) for more tips on viewing guidelines. **To report disturbances, call MBNMS at (831) 236-6797.**

### Tips for Kayakers, Divers, and Boaters to avoid disturbances

- Divers should *avoid surfacing under or near a sea otter raft* from below.
- Kayakers and boaters should remain a *minimum of 10 boat lengths* (scaled up by craft size) away from rafting sea otters.
- *Passing by parallel* is less threatening to sea otters and other wildlife.
- If, *at any distance*, a sea otter has raised its head and is looking at you, you are too close and should move further away to avoid disturbance.
- Be aware of the location of sea otters before you dive, boat or kayak into an area.





Large sea otter raft in front of Monterey Bay Aquarium.

Photo: Dan Schwartz

**HANDS TO YOURSELF**  
Keep wildlife safe and healthy.

**KEEP PETS HOME OR ON A LEASH**  
Wildlife and pets can harm each other.

**REPORT WILDLIFE THAT SEEMS ABANDONED OR SICK**  
Leave it to the experts.

**Give wildlife space.**

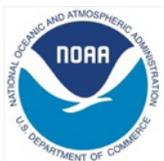
**HANG BACK AND ENJOY THE VIEW**

**NOAA Enforcement Hotline**  
+1 (800) 853-1964

**LEND A HAND WITH TRASH REMOVAL**  
Keep their home clean.

**SNACKS TO YOURSELF**  
Wildlife can find their own food.

**LEAD BY EXAMPLE**  
Help others become responsible wildlife watchers.



**MONTEREY BAY**  
NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

